

Issue 1—Land Tenure Adjustment

Conflicts regarding land tenure adjustment drive disposal, acquisition and retention of public lands. The checkerboard ownership patterns of the RPFO Planning Area create conflicts with access and management of resources. Field Office Resource Specialists and Managers will consider the particular resource value of each parcel of public land and the most effective management. In addition, BLM staff will consider the holdings of the New Mexico State Land Office. Questions associated with this issue include the following.

- What lands should be acquired?
- What lands should be retained in federal ownership?
- What lands should be identified for disposal?
- What areas should be considered for right-of-way corridors?
- What easements should be acquired?
- What communication sites are needed, and where should they be placed?
- What areas should be excluded from use for communication sites?
- What areas could be considered for use for Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP)?
- What areas should be excluded from R&PP uses?



Issue 2—Mineral and Energy Development

Special attention is needed to address mineral and energy development conflicts (i.e., oil and gas, saleable and locatable minerals, geothermal resources, wind energy, and related transportation networks) with other land and resource uses and values. Areas must be identified in which energy development is suitable, unsuitable, or should be restricted. Questions to be answered include the following.

- What areas should be considered for travertine development?
- What areas should be considered for sand and gravel development?
- What areas should be considered for development of landscaping materials?
- What known and potential areas for uranium development should be considered?
- What areas have potential for oil and gas exploration?
- What areas have potential for energy resource development?
- What areas are suited to biomass energy development?
- What areas should be considered for wind and/or solar energy development?
- What areas should be considered for geothermal development?
- What areas should be excluded from energy and mineral development?



Issue 3—Recreation and Visitor Services

As the population in the area continues to increase, the demand for recreational uses of public land and visitor services has also increased. The public has expressed interest in using several RPFO areas for hiking, camping and off-highway vehicle (OHV) use. Additionally, BLM guidelines for specially designated areas have changed, so previously designated areas must be reevaluated to comply with these new requirements. Questions associated with this issue are as follows.

- What types of recreational uses should be allowed in specially designated areas of public land?
- What areas should be designated for special recreation management areas (SRMAs)? What would be the specific strategy for managing the SRMAs?
- To what extent, and where (general areas), should the BLM develop facilities and generally improve recreation access opportunities to meet public demand, to provide for public health and safety, and to direct use away from areas of conflict?



Issue 4—Visual Resources Management (VRM)

BLM guidance requires that visual resource values in the Planning Area be managed in accordance with objectives assigned under VRM classes. These classes will be designated in the Planning Area based on an inventory of visual resources and management considerations for other uses. Questions to be considered include the following.

- What level of protection is needed to meet VRM objectives?
- Should some areas be given a special designation for VRM values?
- Are scenic objectives properly established?
- Do scenic objectives need to be modified or established for some areas?
- Has sufficient inventory been done to identify VRM classes for the entire Planning Area?
- Should development be limited or excluded from some areas in order to maintain scenic values?

VRM Management Class Objectives

Class I - To preserve the existing character of the landscape.

Class II - To retain the existing character of the landscape.

Class III - To partially retain the existing character of the landscape.

Class IV - To provide for activities that require major modification of the landscape.



Issue 5—Special Area Designations

The BLM's Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1) requires that application of the following administrative designations be considered when developing RMPs.

- Area of Critical Environmental Concern
- Back Country Byway
- National Recreation Area
- National Trail
- Research Natural Area
- Special Recreation Management Area
- Wild and Scenic River

In the Rio Puerco RMP (1986, maintained and reprinted 1992), the 23 areas listed in Table B were designated as Special Management Areas (SMAs). Under current BLM guidance, SMAs are not recognized as valid area designations. The agency will analyze and evaluate the correct designation for each listed area and other prospective special areas. [Note: Some of these special areas have been designated by Congressional legislation, as footnoted below.]

TABLE B
SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS ON RIO PUERCO FIELD OFFICE LANDS

(Source: 1986 RMP; 1992 Reprint)

Azabache Station
Ball Ranch
Big Bead Mesa
Bluewater Canyon
Cabezon Peak
Cañon Jarido
Cañon Tapia
Continental Divide Trail
El Malpais*
Elk Springs
Guadalupe Ruin and Community
Headcut Prehistoric Community
Historic Homesteads
Ignacio Chavez
Jones Canyon
Ojito*
Pelon Watershed
Petaca Pinta
Pronoun Cave Complex
San Luis Mesa Raptor Area
Tent Rocks*
Torrejon Fossil Fauna
1870s Wagon Road Trail

Note: * These areas have been specially designated by acts of the U.S. Congress; those special designations will not be altered by this RMP.



Issue 6—Travel and Trails Management

BLM guidance requires that travel management areas and the designation of off-highway vehicle (OHV) management areas must be included as decisions made at the land use plan level. Travel management decisions significantly interrelate with other resource and use decisions in the RMP, especially because of the area's growing urban population and increasing demand for off-highway vehicle use. Travel management must be considered consistently with all resource program goals and objectives, primary travelers, objectives for allowing travel, setting characteristics such as VRM classes, and the primary means of travel allowed while still meeting objectives and maintaining setting characteristics. Areas must be classified as open, limited, or closed to motorized travel. Questions associated with this issue are as follows.

- What access needs exist in the RPFO (including those identified by users or interest groups)?
- What easements should be acquired?
- Which roads should be closed?
- What right-of-way exclusion areas are needed?
- What areas will be open, limited, or closed to motorized vehicle travel?
- How will classification of use be determined (e.g., foot, vehicle, horseback)?
- Where should travel management areas be delineated? What would be acceptable modes of access and travel for each travel management area?



Issue 7—Public Land-Urban Interface

This issue is defined by the conflicts that occur between the management of public lands and the development of population centers or related infrastructure adjacent to those lands. Frequently referred to as Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). Public land-urban interface is a term that more correctly identifies its broader context. Public land-urban interface issues are prevalent around the cities of Albuquerque and Rio Rancho and the Village of Placitas. Some of the affected areas in need of further analysis include the Candy Kitchen subdivision (east of Ramah), the Cuba/Torreón area, Placitas, and the Sedora holdings (west of Los Lunas). Associated public land-urban interface concerns include fire management, mineral development, recreation and visual resources management. Questions associated with this issue are similar to those raised for other issues.

- What areas should be considered for right-of-way corridors?
- What easements should be acquired?
- What areas are suitable for communication sites, and where should they be excluded?
- What areas should be considered for use for Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP), and where should such uses be excluded?
- What areas have potential for oil and gas exploration?
- What areas have potential for energy resource development?
- What areas should be mined (i.e. for sand, gravel, travertine, uranium)?
- What types of recreational uses should be allowed in specially designated areas of public land?
- Should development be limited or excluded from some areas to protect scenic and other values?

